

A NEW NATIONAL PRODUCT—BEET-ROOT SUGAR.

ONE of the compensations growing out of these troublous times has been an extraordinary stimulus communicated to our industries, and the development of new sources of national prosperity and wealth.

One of the sources bids fair to be a plentiful supply of sugar from the beet. We have had an opportunity, recently, of examining several specimens of it in this city, which were manufactured at Chicago, from beets grown on the prairies of Illinois. The supply of sugar by the Mississippi being cut off by the embargo of that river, Mr. Belcher, a well-known sugar refiner in the West, turned his attention to the refining of syrup from the sorghum plant, which has now become a staple crop in Iowa and Illinois. It is estimated that five million gallons of syrup were produced in the West the past year. To extend the source of supply of domestic sugar, Mr. Belcher procured last spring, from Europe, a supply of seeds of various kinds of the sugar beet, and by the agency of the Illinois Central Railway Company, distributed them among the farmers on the line of that road, and through a range of two hundred miles, with a view to ascertain the kind of soil and climate best adapted to the growth of the root.

The result, so far, has been of a most gratifying character. An analysis of several samples raised in the black prairie soil yielded from nine to thirteen and a half per cent. of saccharine matter. The samples of sugar produced were from liquor evaporated in an open pan, and although undoubtedly far inferior to what might have been produced by more elaborate and scientific processes, have been pronounced by our most intelligent refiners to be of a superior quality, and well granulated, and worth to-day ten cents per pound. The beet is pronounced by intelligent Germans, familiar with the process of sugar-making from it, to be fully equal to the best quality produced in Germany or France under the most favorable circumstances.

The production of sugar from beets has now come to be a leading interest in several European countries. The lands adapted to their culture command the highest prices, and the crop is so profitable that it warrants the most elaborate system of culture. The improvements in the quality of beet and in the process of manufacture, have been so great, that the yield within the last thirty years has increased from three to eleven per cent. Since this percentage has been obtained, the beet in France has become the most important crop in the Empire. In 1861, 148,000 tons were raised in that country, against 9,000 tons in 1830. In Belgium the crop in 1861 was 18,000 tons. In Germany a very large amount was produced; the aggregate for Europe exceeding, in 1861, 200,000 tons, worth more than \$40,000,000.

In our own country the culture of the beet is beginning to attract great interest and attention. The Agricultural Societies of Iowa and Illinois have already taken action in the matter, in which they have been vigorously seconded by the Illinois Central Railway Company, which has offered to transport, free of charge to the manufacturers, all the beets grown from the seeds distributed by Mr. Belcher. Enough has been accomplished to demonstrate that a superior sugar can be produced, and that the percentage of saccharine matter in the American beet exceeds that in the European, as might be expected from the greater heat and moisture of our climate. The President of the Illinois Central Railway has already concluded an arrangement with a German firm to establish a refinery on his farm at Chats-

worth, Ill., the buildings and machinery for which will be in readiness for work the coming season. The contractors will employ fifteen hundred acres of land in the culture of the root.

In the production of beet sugar we have all the advantage of the experience of European manufacturers. In the outset of the culture in France it was stimulated by the Government by the most prodigal bounties. It has now gained such firm footing that an enormous revenue is derived from it. It is so profitable that the annual rental of lands devoted to it in France exceeds four times the price now asked for the soil of the best prairie lands. In France the beet is cultivated entirely by manual labor. In this country, as soon as the plant gained root, the whole culture would be done by labor-saving implements. The produce of this country, the past year, averaged from fifteen to twenty-five tons to the acre, at a cost of not over one dollar the ton. The only element of cost of the manufactured article, remaining unsolved, is that of refining. But, with the well-known skill of our refiners, and the extraordinary success which has attended their efforts, there can be no doubt that this will be equally striking when applied to the clarifying of beet as of cane sugar.

The value of the results growing out of the introduction of the sugar beet into this country can hardly be estimated. Sugar already stands next to manufactures of wool in our imports, and is very rapidly becoming the first. We pay nearly \$40,000,000 annually for foreign sugars alone. If we can place ourselves, as the French have already done, in a position of independence of foreigners, we can keep at home the 40,000,000 in gold and silver, which a balance against us has compelled us to export, to make good our account in the great London clearing house.

We hope the New Agricultural Commission will devote a portion of the appropriation made to it by Congress for the purpose of collecting and diffusing information upon this important subject. It is a crop peculiarly adapted to our Northern States, from the abundant moisture and heat of our climate—two indispensable conditions of successful culture.

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